

UNITED STATES DEPARTMENT OF AGRICULTURE
Rural Electrification Administration
Washington 25, D. C.

February 20, 1948

To: All REA Borrowers

From: George W. Haggard, Assistant Administrator

Subject: Use of Visual Methods for Telling the Co-op Story

One of the most important developments in the REA program is an increasing awareness among borrowers of the importance of carrying on membership education programs. It is now generally realized that no co-op can succeed in the long run without the membership loyalty and understanding produced by such a program.

Many co-ops have made extensive use of such familiar informational methods as newsletters, business and social meetings, statewide publications and others. These methods are effective in reaching the membership but a successful co-op must also have the confidence and understanding of the entire community. One of the most valuable ways of accomplishing this is to use visual methods, such as pictures and displays. We all know that one good picture takes the place of many words.

In view of the response to a survey on this subject made last fall among co-op officials, we are enclosing a statement on suggested uses of a set of 12 displays produced as a result of this survey and now being offered to REA borrowers. We hope you will find this material helpful.

Enclosure

George W. Haggard

MAR 8 1948

4080
811

HOW TO USE CO-OP DISPLAYS

In a survey last fall, many REA co-op officials expressed great interest in a program designed to tell their story through the use of colorful displays. It was agreed that to be practical, these displays would have to be designed so as to have wide use not only in the co-op offices or windows, but also at meetings and fairs, or as a matter of fact, anywhere the co-op story needed telling. They would have to be simple enough so that an inexperienced person would have no difficulty in setting them up, and sturdy enough to remain fresh and attractive through many months of use. They would have to compete successfully with the professional displays in general commercial use, and yet fall within the limited budget available.

A set of five-foot portable displays produced as a result of this survey is now being offered to REA co-ops by a national manufacturer of display materials. Here are some suggestions as to how these displays can be used to get the co-op story across with maximum effectiveness to both co-op members and the public.

Where To Use The Displays

1. In co-op windows. Co-ops serving large territories may want to use more than one set of displays, showing them in various window locations over the territory. If an office is on the main square or on a street which is used at night, it will probably pay to keep the display illuminated after dark.
2. In co-op office lobbies, at annual meetings, at other member meetings, at county and local fairs, in libraries or schools.
3. In the offices of other agricultural leaders, such as the county agent or home demonstration agent.
4. As exhibits during talks about your co-op given at local meetings of business men or other groups.

MAR 9 1948

Since the displays are unsigned, it would be well to prepare a signature strip for use when showing displays outside the office. A painted or printed strip could be used. All of the displays will accommodate a signature about 1-1/2" wide and 28" long.

For maximum effectiveness, displays should be shown not more than one month in the same spot. If more than one window or space is available, displays can be moved every two weeks.

How To Get The Most Out Of These Displays

Packed with each display in this series will be a set of suggestions for other ideas which will increase the impact of the facts presented. Use of the supplementary material suggested, or other ideas developed by the co-op staff, will add greatly to the effectiveness of the displays.

To illustrate, here are some ideas as to use of the first two displays in this series:

1. Annual Meeting Display -- This display would have its first use about a month or six weeks before the annual meeting. At that time the manager might prepare a talk to be given before a local civic group on just how the co-op functions as a business. This display set up on a table near the speaker will help to impress this story on the audience. About a month before the annual meeting is probably the best time to place this display in the office window or lobby. Along with the display might be shown a sign listing exactly what the order of business will be at the annual meeting -- further emphasizing local management and local ownership. The display can, of course, be shown at the annual meeting itself. It can also prove helpful at meetings of new members. There are many other places where this display can be of real value in getting across the story of member-ownership.

2. "Let's Get These Facts Straight" -- This display tells the basic business facts about an REA co-op. It can be used alone in an office window or lobby, or in any of the other places suggested, or it can be strengthened by the addition of other material. Here are two possibilities:

a. Supplementary card listing the taxes you pay during the year to various government sub-divisions.

b. A poster saying "These Are The People Who Own This Business" under which appears a list of all the members of the co-op, perhaps with the names of the directors circled in red. Many co-ops can prepare such a list in usable form from their mailing lists. It will be a sizable job in a large co-op, but it will add greatly to the impact of this display.

How To Take Care Of These Displays

1. The displays should be dusted at least once a week while in use. They are finished in waterproof paint so a slightly dampened cloth can be used to remove any bad marks, provided it is used gently.

2. Between uses of the display, replace it in the original delivery carton. With careful treatment each display can be used for many occasions.

